

## More Responses From The Mountains: The DTWOF Debate Rages On ...

After reading Betsy Miller's letter to the Editor in which she declared "Dykes To Watch Out For" to be in "poor taste", I immediately reread it to make sure she said what I thought she said. Next I felt angry and then scared. Life without "Dykes To Watch Out For" would be like life without hope, validation, community, friendship, culture, intuition, clarity, perspective, synthesis and oh yes, hilarity and humor. Poor taste? I can't find that anywhere in Alison Bechdel's work. I genuinely find her work to be brilliant with impeccably wonderful and witty "taste".

I eventually realized that the fear I felt initially about losing dyke culture in my life may have simply been the projection of Betsy Miller's fear of having dyke culture in her church. But you know Betsy, you have the choice now and will continue to have the choice in the future to "read or not to read" the comic strip; please don't get so scared that you advocate taking that choice away from the rest of us.

JB Barna  
Colchester

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I think "Dykes To Watch Out For" is brilliant, witty, sensitive, and insightful. Our whole family (children and all) has enjoyed reading Alison Bechdel immensely.

Jan Passion  
Shelburne

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I definitely do NOT agree that "Dykes To Watch Out For" is in poor taste and inappropriate for *OITM*. ... I must disagree with Ms. Miller on several counts. First, I don't think the comic is particularly raunchy -- it deals with real issues in a forthright manner, and I see nothing wrong with that. If we ARE trying to educate people about who we are, then we should present our community with all its quirks. Heterosexuals who accept us based on a sanitized version of reality don't really accept US; rather, they accept who they want to think we are. Second, I'm not sure *OITM*'s purpose is to educate the "general public," whatever that is. According to its own title, *OITM* is "Vermont's newspaper for lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals," not "Vermont's newspaper for heterosexuals and the general public." ...

Kim Goodwin  
Burlington

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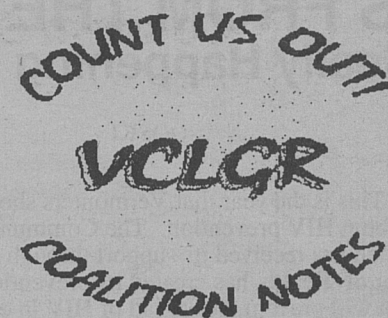
As the person who distributes *OITM* to the United Methodist Church (Rutland) and Grace Congregational Church (UCC), I should like to add my voice to the debate regarding Alison Bechdel's "Dykes To Watch Out For". I believe some folks from the Methodist Church found the strip "objectionable" and "inappropriate". I might add that no one at the Methodist Church has said anything to me when I deliver the papers. I suspect, however, that the objections refer to those panels or parts of panels that depict explicit sex. I further think the same folks would object if the cartoon had been of the heterosexual variety.

One of your readers cited the "presumably homophobic leadership of the Rutland United Methodist Church." She may not be aware that within the last few years the church has become a Reconciling Congregation and clearly welcomes gays, lesbians and bi(sexual)s to full membership and worship at the church. Some objections with "Dykes To Watch Out For" had also been raised at Grace Church. Again, they were not with the whole strip. I need also to point out that this congregation is struggling with its efforts to become Open and Affirming. Grace was also host to the monthly potlucks of the Rutland Area Gay/Lesbian Connection and Marble Valley P-FLAG.

Both Grace and United Methodist, of all the churches in Rutland, have been out front in support and alliance. As such, they have absorbed a good deal of flack from our homegrown homophobes. One of your readers thought it not a "brilliant idea" to distribute *OITM* at these churches. Wrong! The heart of homophobia lies, unfortunately, within the Christian church. To deny the voice of homosexuals in those Christian churches who are allies would hand a victory to the bigots. To fight on every front means just that and the battle must be strong and consistent.

Having said all this, let me say how much I love "Dykes To Watch Out For". I, like many others, turn to it first so I can catch up on all the activities of the gang at MadWimmin Books. It is Bechdel's loving but unflinching eye that makes this feature a classic and it is also her creative courage that depicts sexual activity without shame or apology.

Peter Cooper  
P-FLAG  
Rutland



**NORTHFIELD** -- The Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VCLGR) held its annual retreat on February 12 at Destiny Lodge in Northfield. The Radical Faeries were wonderful hosts, treating us to wonderful food and fabulous costume changes! Upcoming board meetings will be on April 23 and May 7 at Gifford Hospital in Randolph. Everyone is welcome!

**SAME-SEX MARRIAGE** The board of directors is currently finalizing its position statement on same-sex marriage. Basically, the board supports the legal right to marry, but wishes to express the need for equal rights and privileges for all people, regardless of marital status. Feel free to contact the board with any thoughts or concerns you have on this matter. A final position statement will be presented here when our work is complete.

**ADOPTION REFORM** The issue of adoption reform is being studied in Montpelier. The VCLGR board is working on a position statement to support the rights of all Vermonters to adopt regardless of marital status or sexual orientation. The Coalition has created an adoption task force to study and monitor this issue closely. For more information, call Susan Murray at (802)388-6356.

**HIV/AIDS CONFIDENTIALITY BILL** Although not strictly a gay issue, this bill will affect many of us. There is a bill in the Vermont legislature that will protect the confidentiality of HIV-related information, and require informed consent before an HIV test can be performed. For more information on how you can help to get this bill passed, call Erica Garfin at the VT AIDS Council at (802)229-2557.

**MEMBERSHIP** By now, all VCLGR members should have received their membership cards and stickers. Membership is \$15/year, but no one is refused for lack of funds. If you have not joined, it's not too late. Remember, membership has its privileges! Are you a card-carrying member?

**VT INTERACTIVE TV SERIES** The final interactive TV event will be held on Friday, April 28th from 6:30-8:30pm. This will be your last chance to flirt over the airwaves with people from all corners of VT for a while, so we hope to see you there! Call Sue at (802)728-4121 or Christopher at (802)365-9139 for the site nearest you.

**COMMITTEES** The board is looking for VCLGR members to serve on its various committees. Are you "concerned" about the food at VCLGR conferences? The conference planning committee might be the place for you! Other committees include legislative policy, community outreach, programs, membership, and fundraising. This is your chance to get involved, but without getting in over your head. If you can give 2-4 hours a month, it would be greatly appreciated.

If you need to contact the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VCLGR), you may write to PO Box 1125, Montpelier, VT 05602, or you may call (802) 365-9139 or (802) 482-3927.

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## Opinions In The Mountains

Readers are encouraged to voice their opinions by responding to the question posed in this monthly feature. Please send responses to *OITM* at P.O. Box 177, Burlington, VT 05402, or via the Internet at OutVermont@aol.com.

This month's editorial pages deal with issues of HIV/AIDS prevention strategies. Are the government and AIDS service organizations, like Vermont CARES and the Brattleboro Area AIDS Project, doing a good enough job in HIV prevention work? If not, what can they do better?

Readers' opinions will be printed in an upcoming issue. Responses to previous questions can be found above.

# Out in the Mountains

VERMONT'S NEWSPAPER FOR LESBIANS, GAY MEN, AND BISEXUALS

By subscribing now to *OITM*, not only will you guarantee delivery to your mailbox (in a discreet envelope, of course), but you will also help underwrite the rising costs of publishing the newspaper. We also welcome any additional contributions you can make to support our continuing existence. Checks should be made payable to *OITM* and sent, along with this form, to: *OITM*, P.O. Box 177, Burlington, Vermont 05402-0177.

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Sponsors are especially welcome from those who prefer to pick up *OITM* at one of the paper's distribution points rather than be added to the mailing list.

Please also let us know if you'd like to get involved in the newspaper.

04/95